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**MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT**

**SUBJECT: Significant Build-up of Combat-Related Pharmaceuticals in North Vietnam**

A recent survey of pharmaceutical imports by the Asian Communist countries reveals that North Vietnam, with Communist Chinese support, has accumulated a large stockpile of antibiotics and other combat-related pharmaceuticals, possibly in anticipation of a protracted or perhaps more intensified conflict.

North Vietnam's imports of certain combat-related pharmaceuticals\* rose during the first nine months of 1965 to about six times the value of such imports in 1964. (See appended Table). In the case of penicillin, the excess over normal annual imports during November 1964 - October 1965 would have been sufficient, according to US experience, to meet the requirements of a million troops under combat conditions for about a year. Even allowing for full supply of the Viet Cong and the treatment of domestic casualties, North Vietnam could have stockpiled enough penicillin to meet the needs of more than 800,000 troops in active combat for one year. As in the case of penicillin, there also appears to be heavy stockpiling of sulfa drugs and blood plasma.

\* Penicillin, streptomycin, Chloramphenicol, blood plasma, sulfa drugs and antimalarials.

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Although Communist countries have supplied most of the combat-related pharmaceuticals to North Vietnam, Japan has played a key role in supplying blood plasma and West Germany has been an important source of antimalarials. Moreover, in the case of Communist China, Free World countries apparently have been the exclusive source of recent imports. Antibiotics were obtained chiefly from the UK and Japan; blood plasma from Japan; sulfa drugs from Denmark; and anti-malarial drugs from Denmark and West Germany.

The suspension of such shipments from the Free World probably would have little immediate effect but over the longer run could impair North Vietnam's ability to assess critical supplies of combat-related pharmaceuticals in support of the Communist war-effort. Most useful in this connection would be suspension of deliveries of blood plasma from Japan, antimalarials from West Germany, and pharmaceuticals of all kinds from Cambodia.

Enclosure:

Table 1. North Vietnam: Imports of Selected Pharmaceuticals,  
Pre-1964, 1964, and January-September 1965

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